

in a lot of ways, but nothing compared to what we got in subsequent years, one subsequent year being 1974.

Q: At that stage in the game, Gates had already made his decision that Polaris would be controlled by the Navy?

Adm. M.: Oh, yes. Well, Gates' establishment of his staff was a compromise over creating a strategic command or maybe having a unified service. It was a compromise position, and it was a good one. It really was. It got the heat off of having a strategic command, you see, and it got the move on to coordinate the weapons planning. This really was a compromise on the part of Gates. When he established the staff, he yielded to the pressures for the creation of some kind of order in the way we addressed our nuclear weapons planning and our nuclear weapons forces. It yielded also to some of the pressure from people like Admiral Burke to keep this all separate; each outfit would run its own programs. So it was a compromise and over the years, history has shown that it really was probably a pretty good one.

Q: Let me ask, when you were engaged in this planning process, were you affected by some of the major events

that came along, like the Bay of Pigs?

Adm. M.: No. The nuclear weapons planning process is done by the Joint Strategic Planning Staff. It really is before the fact. You do all the planning on how the weapons are going to be used; you develop the plans in various options that the President can use. Then, when an actual situation develops such as the Cuban missile crisis, that staff is no longer in it. The planning has been done. The options are up to the President.

Q: I see, yes.

Adm. M.: It's very interesting. I am going to jump ahead a little bit, because I went back to that staff later as a vice admiral, as the deputy director, just before I retired. And it's significant that there has never been any real change of policy between the time I went there in 1960 and when I went back again in 1973. In fact, in 1973, I called for the policy papers. I said I wanted to read the policy papers for the staff and get up to speed in the guidance on our targeting strategy. They brought me the same papers that I had put in the files in 1960, complete with my dog-eared notes. It was all what I brought there in 1960 from the Joint Staff in Washington.

of course, by the time we got in there were other problems. I reported in and Knoll kind of smiled. That was the end of it. That's how we got started.

It was a nice tour of duty. The Cuban missile crisis came up.

Q: Yes, and you were involved in that?

Adm. M.: I was involved in that but in a very perfunctory manner.

Q: Tell me about it.

Adm. M.: We were at anchor in Norfolk. I lived in Norfolk, out at Virginia Beach. I got a call on Sunday that said, "We want you to get under way right away. A missile crisis has blown up. We're going to have to get some ships down into the Caribbean right away. We don't know what's going to happen. We need ammunition. We want you under way immediately, as fast as you can get under way." This was Sunday afternoon.

Q: Were you to be attached to the Second Fleet?

Adm. M.: Well, I was a member of the Second Fleet at that time.

Q: The commander of the Second Fleet was also learning at that point and he had problems!

Adm. M.: That's right. We all had a lot of problems. Anyway, my role was pretty minor. They were going to get the carriers down there. If we had to use nuclear weapons, I had the backup nuclear weapons, but I also had a lot of ammunition if we went conventional. I was to go down there and support an aircraft carrier, whatever aircraft carrier they got down there. So, get under way. I got under way. Fifty per cent of the crew was off on liberty. I got under way with 50 per cent of the crew and started out. They said they'd send the rest of them later.

That night I shoved out of Norfolk and I reported to whomever I was told to report to. Eventually we got there and I steamed around south of Cuba for a while.

Actually, they decided to get us out of the way and so we went down around the south side of Santo Domingo. Sometimes they'd put a ship with me, a destroyer or something, to escort, but mostly I was either independent or maybe I'd join up with another Service Force ship and we'd steam around together.

Q: Was there any concern about Soviet submarines?

Adm. M.: Yes, we had Soviet submarines and my counter to that was very easy on the south side of the Dominican Republic. There's a great big shelf where the water's about 60 to 90 feet deep! I just used to go up there and cruise back and forth, throw fishing lines over the side, did a lot of fishing and so forth.

Q: And you were safe from submarines!

Adm. M.: That took care of the submarine problem. It's very easy to counter a submarine if you can get around in 60 to 90 feet of water.

I transferred a little ammunition now and then. I'd see the carriers occasionally. We'd join up with them and pass messages back and forth, but it was dull, really dull, because I was even out of the message pattern. We didn't know for sure what was going on, we just heard rumors a lot. Guys were sending messages now and then.

Q: You actually saw nothing of the quarantine, then?

Adm. M.: No. We just sat down there and once in a while somebody would get unhappy with me because they couldn't communicate with me. Well, that was because of the archaic communications system that we had and if

you were pretty far away from a guy he might not be able to get you, there's no question about it.

Q: What carriers were you - ?

Adm. M.: Well, let's see. Chick Hayward had the carrier task force, I guess.

Q: Yes, he did.

Adm. M.: He must have had the Enterprise down there because Vince de Poix was around. I remember that. And maybe the Independence with Roy Swanson. I'm not too sure what the carriers were. I used to see them every once in a while.

But that was pretty dull. It was about sixty days. The crew eventually arrived, bit by bit. They'd show up on another tanker. They sent a destroyer tender down. We rendezvoused with them out in the open seas, exchanged visits, and swapped stories.

Q: That must have been something of a handicap, to have 50 per cent of your crew absent when you started out?

Adm. M.: We didn't have to do anything. Didn't have

to move much ammunition. It didn't take that many people to run it, really. It was a very simple operation, just cruised down there and when we got there we just cruised around and listened for orders. We stood a few more watches than we might otherwise.

Q: In the light of the circumstances and how it developed, would it not have been wise to have permitted you to delay a little bit and assemble your crew?

Adm. M.: Yes. Well, my personal reaction to the whole Cuban missile crisis was that it's like a lot of things, we overreact. We really overreacted. I watched that more and more as I became a more senior officer. I don't know what it is about Americans, why we are so concerned about moving immediately. We don't sit and think. We're the worst negotiators at a table, whether it be at Yalta or Vladivostok, SALT I or II, we get so frantic and so eager to get the job finished that we don't really take quite as much time as we should. I think that whole crisis was blown out of proportion a little bit more than it should have been. Not that it wasn't serious. I think in a lot of ways the negotiations that were finally worked out - we took our stuff out of Italy

and Turkey and so forth and they took their stuff out of Cuba - was probably a pretty good swap.

I am not privy and have not been privy to all the messages, by any means. I wish I had been. But I really think that thing was far out of proportion to what it should have been. Just like I think some of the crises in the Middle East, certainly as far as the Mediterranean is concerned, in recent years were blown out of proportion.

Q: I wonder if one of the problems wasn't the fact that the military situation was so closely tied to the political and the White House and the command was in the White House?

Adm. M.: Could be. You see, a lot of these things stem from improved communications procedures. Look at the times that it has transpired since then. Let's go to the Tonkin Gulf. How did we get into the Tonkin Gulf situation in the first place? When we follow those communications, when you see those messages, when you watch the pressures that were put on those commanding officers of those ships, to generate in their own minds frequently the threat, the attack, that actually materialized. There's still a great amount of doubt, I'll bet you, in the minds of many people